

Don't let your foster child be left behind: The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

By Mitch Kremer,
DCFS Education Advisor

Since its passage in 2001, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has created opportunities for some children in low-performing public schools. But services and funding differ, making it confusing to know exactly what NCLB can provide for your child.

The NCLB is supposed to provide a Public School Choice (School Choice) option for students attending public schools that have not met NCLB standards for two consecutive years. These children are conditionally eligible to transfer to a higher-performing school based on availability. The NCLB is also supposed to provide a Supplemental Educational Services (SES) option for students in public schools that have not met NCLB standards for three consecutive years.

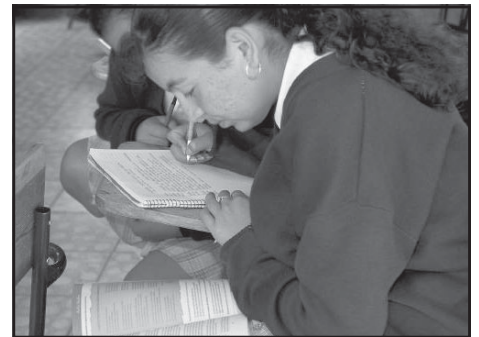
Parents can contact schools directly to determine if their child's school has been identified for school improvement and is required to provide School Choice or SES. Also, before the start of the 2006-2007 school year, schools that must offer either

School Choice or SES are required to mail letters to parents who have children attending those schools.

Public School Choice Process

With Public School Choice, a parent may choose to transfer the student to a higher performing school within the same district, if available, when the child's current school has not met NCLB standards for two years in a row.

- Prior to the beginning of each school year, districts must notify the parents of students in choice schools that they have the option of sending their children to a school in the same district that is not identified for school improvement, including public charter schools.
- Parents have 30 days from the date of notice to decide whether to exercise the choice option.
- Students who transfer to a school not in school improvement will be enrolled in the same manner as all other children at that public school.
- Districts must provide or pay for transportation to a school not in school improvement.



- If there are space or funding limitations, districts must give priority to the lowest achieving children from low-income families.
- If none of the schools in your district have met NCLB standards, there may be inter-governmental agreements with neighboring districts.

Supplemental Educational Services (SES)

SES are defined in the NCLB as tutoring and other high-quality academic enrichment services provided, in addition to instruction during the school day, to increase the achievement of eligible children. A parent whose child is in a low performing school can choose either School Choice or SES, but not both. If School Choice is not available in the

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district, SES must be offered based on available funding.

- Prior to the beginning of the school year, school districts must annually notify parents, identify area providers, and provide a description of the services offered by each provider.
- Parents then have 30 days from the date of notice to decide whether to exercise the SES option.
- Schools must help parents select an SES provider, if help is requested.
- Schools in school improvement status must arrange for eligible students to receive SES from providers with a demonstrated record of effectiveness.
- If there is a space or funding limitation, districts must give priority to the lowest achieving children from low-income families.
- School districts are not required to pay for or provide transportation to supplemental educational services.

Foster parents working with a private agency may contact their agency's Education Liaison for assistance. DCFS Foster or adoptive parents who have questions or need assistance in accessing Choice or SES may contact one of the Southern Region Education Advisors, Kendra Homoya 618-993-7134 in the Marion office or Bessie Peabody 618-583-2125 in the East St. Louis office.

Family Connections – FCS Educational Initiative Program

Family Centered Services are a variety of programs coordinated by Local Area Networks (LANs) around the state, and funded by DCFS. In 2005, DCFS decided that the focus of those services would be on youth at-risk of truancy, suspensions, or expulsions.



Joe Smith

One such program, called Family Connections, has been developed by Egyptian Public and Mental Health Services in Eldorado. This program serves Gallatin, Saline, and White counties. According to Program Director Joe Smith, Family Connections began taking referrals in July 2005 and has served approximately 20 youth and their families to date.

"We felt we could serve about 30 families per year," said Smith. "We haven't turned anyone down yet. If they meet the referral criteria, we will attempt to address the issues."



Tara Glover

Needs assessment and direct service is the responsibility of Tara Glover, the Family Connections Support Specialist. Tara provides tutoring, advocacy,

mentoring, home visits, case management and referrals for the three county area.

"I'm the only one doing these things with those youth," she said. "Some months I drive over 1,000 miles."

They both feel that Family Connections has been successful in addressing a definite need in this primarily rural area. Referrals have come from a variety of sources: probation departments, principals, and school social workers.

With funding approved for the 2007 fiscal year beginning July 1, Family Connections will continue to accept referrals. Although no youth in foster care have been referred, foster parents and caseworkers should consider contacting them if these children are experiencing issues relating to truancy, suspensions, or expulsion. Youth who are simply having academic difficulties may not be eligible for the Family Connections program, but they may qualify for other programs. For more information or to make a referral, call Joe Smith or Tara Glover at Egyptian Public and Mental Health, 618-273-3326.

DCFS Foster Parent Appreciation Events in Southern Region

DCFS offices throughout the Southern Region celebrated Foster Parent Appreciation Month. These events were organized by DCFS staff to honor the families for their tireless work.

Anna

A reception at the Anna field office was held on May 22. Snacks, cake and punch were provided and special recognition was given to all foster parents in Union County who had accepted a placement or adopted a child in the past year.

Cairo

Staff from the Cairo office welcomed foster parents on May 8. A meal, games, and door prizes were provided. Awards to all foster parents were made, with a special recognition given to the longest licensed foster parent.

Effingham

Families came to the Effingham office on May 11 for snacks and drinks. Staff kept the children entertained, and they presented all foster families with certificates of appreciation, as well as special candles.

Harrisburg/Metropolis

Staff organized a luncheon at the Harrisburg field office for staff and families on May 12. Special recognition was given to foster parents who accepted placements in the last year.

Marion

Foster parents had the opportunity to meet new placement workers at an open house and luncheon at the Marion Field Office on May 10. Food and drinks were provided.

Madison County

The three field offices in Madison County (Alton, Granite City, and Wood River) hosted an evening of pizza and fun at a local restaurant on May 10.

Mt Vernon

Staff at the Mt. Vernon field office opened the doors wide for foster parents on May 11. Prizes were given to all who attended.

Olney

The Olney field office hosted an open house on May 30 and introduced new staff. Finger foods, snacks and drinks were provided and the foster parent with the most years of service received special recognition.

Salem

A reception was held on May 9 at the Salem Grace Church of the Nazarene. A full meal was served. Foster parents were presented with certificates of appreciation, and a group picture of families and staff was taken.

Southern Region's plan scores high

The Southern Region's Foster Parent Law implementation plan received a score of 102.90 points out of a possible 104. This represents an improvement over last year's plan and reflects an increased emphasis on foster parent involvement and participation in developing the plan.

The Region's decision to use a more interactive, 'hands-on' approach to training foster parents and caseworkers on the Foster Parent Law was highlighted by reviewers as an especially effective technique. This year the Advisory Council again plans on using this process, which utilizes reality-based vignettes to demonstrate to participants how the Foster Parent Law impacts on many aspects of child welfare practice.

This year trainings are planned for September and/or October. All Southern Region foster parents will receive notification of the dates, times, and locations of these trainings. If you would like more information about this activity or the Foster Parent Advisory Council please contact Michael Bollman, Co-Chair in the Fairview Heights office, at 618-394-2137.

Southern Region Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Modules

SIU-Edwardsville
618-650-3213

Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS *Ramada Inn*
July 17, 24 & 31 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

SIU-Carbondale
618-536-7751

Module 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Childhood Sexual Abuse

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

MARION *State Office Building*
Sept. 14, 21 & 28 (Thu) 6-9 p.m.

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions =
6 training hours

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

Integrated Assessment Training

This new, two-hour in-service training was created to answer caregivers' questions about the Integrated Assessment Program.

SIU-Edwardsville
618-650-3213

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS *Caseyville Township Building*
Sept. 20 (Wed) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

SIU-Carbondale
618-536-7751

MARION *State Office Building*
Sept. 7 (Thu) 6-8 p.m.

SIU-Edwardsville
618-650-3213

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS *DCFS Office*
Sept. 6 & 13 (Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Sept. 9 & 16 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

SIU-Carbondale
618-536-7751

EFFINGHAM *DCFS Office*
Sept. 25 & Oct. 2 (Mon) 6-9 p.m.

Child and Family Team Meetings

This instructor-led on-line training is designed to help caregivers understand how a CFTM helps the family and ensures a permanent home for the child; how to prepare for a meeting; what happens between team meetings; and when team meetings are no longer needed in a case. **To register** for this three-hour training, foster parents may call the DCFS Registration Unit in the Office of Training at 877-800-3393. Participants may also register to attend CFTM-C training at computer labs in Springfield and Chicago by calling the same number.

*Aug. 16 (Wed) 8:45 a.m. - 12 p.m.
On-line and Computer Lab
227 So. 7th, Springfield

Aug. 19 (Sat) 8:45 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Aug. 30 (Wed) 6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

*Sept. 15 (Fri) 12:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.
On-line and Computer Lab
6201 So. Emerald, Chicago

Sept. 19 (Tue) 6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Sept. 23 (Sat) 8:45 a.m. - 12 p.m.

*Two classroom trainings have been scheduled for those foster parents who do not have computers or only have dial-up service.

OUR KIDS

Sponsor

Bill Peyton, DCFS Southern
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Regional Reporter

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Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.